

REGION 5—ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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June was cool and wet with an average temperature of 64.7° F, 1.1° below normal, and 5.24" of precipitation, 1.53" above normal. July continued to be cool as the temperature averaged 68.0°, 2.9° below normal, and there was 2.04" of precipitation, 1.98" below normal. The August averages were 70.9°, 1.7° above normal, and 4.57" of rain, 1.01" above normal. The dry July recorded in Syracuse differed greatly from areas to the north, as Oswego and northern Oneida and Herkimer Counties had many thunderstorms during the month. The Old Forge area saw up to two inches of ice pellets on 26 June. Even discounting the July precipitation differences, the wet June and cool weather must have had a negative effect on breeding success.

Unusual waterfowl for the season were Northern Pintail, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Long-tailed Duck, and Red-breasted Merganser. There was a single Snow Goose, no longer considered unusual in the summer given their exploding population. A well-photographed Brown Pelican was on Fourth Lake in Herkimer County for several days in August, often shuttling between Regions 5 and 6. There was some mention that the bird had been first seen some days before but no dates were ever pinned down. The pelican was later taken to a rehabilitator, where it was found that it had ingested some plastic, and the bird died soon thereafter.

Gary Lee found that Common Loons had some breeding success on smaller Herkimer County lakes, but Tom Salo reported that Stillwater Reservoir was very high in June and that he saw no juveniles in August. A Common Loon in alternate plumage at Sandy Pond in August was unusual. Least Bitterns were breeding at several locations, while Great Egret sightings were down, likely due to high water, even as the species seems to increase around us. Black-crowned Night-Heron was scarce, and, once again, none were seen until the last half of the season when they may have been post-breeding dispersals.

A Black Vulture over Syracuse was only the third June sighting. There was little monitoring of the hawk migration in June because of the lack of favorable south winds to push nonbreeding birds towards Derby Hill. What appeared to be an August dispersal flight of raptors, mostly Red-tailed Hawks, showed clearly on radar within several miles of Derby Hill on 17 August but was otherwise not detected. Bald Eagle, Osprey and Merlin are all doing well as summer sightings continue to increase. An "honorary raptor," Common Raven, is another species doing very well. The pair of Peregrine Falcons in Utica commenced nesting late for the second consecutive year and again the nest failed.

A Sandhill Crane over Derby Hill was another summer sighting of a species that breeds immediately to our west and may now be breeding to our north. The two King Rails at Peter Scott Swamp were last reported on 3 June, but few people checked at the peak calling hours of dawn or dusk after that time.

American Coot is normally a rare, local breeder, but they nested at two sites this summer. Shorebird habitat was limited this season with high water on all lakes. The only Whimbrel, Red Knot, and White-rumped Sandpiper reports came from the Sandy Pond outlet at Lake Ontario, while Baird's Sandpiper and Short-billed Dowitcher were found in wet fields and temporary mudflats at Verona Marsh. A Lesser Black-backed Gull was the only unusual gull for the season. 50 Black Terns at Sandy Pond was a large group of August migrants.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo had mostly withdrawn to the southern part of the Region where caterpillars were more numerous, and there were more reports for them than for Black-billed Cuckoo. Both species may have been adversely affected by the cool weather. In the aftermath of the big winter irruption, one Snowy Owl lingered into early June in Oneida County and another Snowy was seen in Onondaga County in August, a first record for that month. Someone deemed it necessary that the latter owl be captured and transported to northern New York, possibly ten percent closer to its breeding range.

The Common Nighthawk watch in Syracuse was forced to relocate this year, so the very low total of nine seen over the last half of August may not be directly comparable to the previous 15 years of data, but numbers have declined drastically over the term of the watch. Red-headed Woodpecker was not found at most of the recent breeding sites, but there were still a few reports of nesting elsewhere. An Olive-sided Flycatcher came with a wave of migrating flycatchers on 12 August, a flight that included an early Blue-headed Vireo. Several Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and a Philadelphia Vireo arrived at season's end. In late August large numbers of Purple Martins were found using a marsh in Three Mile Bay WMA as a staging area, and there was a large assemblage of Cliff Swallows in Oneida County.

Pine Warblers have increased in the southern part of the Region, an area they had barely penetrated during the expansion of the past 20 years. Prairie Warbler was only reported at recent locations although there is much suitable habitat for them elsewhere. Tennessee, Bay-breasted, and Wilson's Warblers had arrived by season's end, and there was a late Louisiana Waterthrush. Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrows seem to be holding on in breeding areas, but early cutting of fields remains a concern. Orchard Oriole had a good season especially at Green Lakes State Park. White-winged Crossbills had left the area by summer, a few Red Crossbills remained, and a few Pine Siskins were still present into July, but they all seemed to leave as the young fledged. This year's lack of a cone crop suggests that this winter will be a poor season after several very good winter finch years.

The wild berry and nut crop at higher elevations was affected by a freeze on 1 June, but production was otherwise good. The white pine and spruce cone crops were spotty with mostly little to no production, while red pine and northern hemlock had some cones. Ash, oaks, and mountain ash had good production, but the beechnut crop was poor.

For the season a total of 202 species was found, three species more than the previous 10 year average. Highlights included Brown Pelican, Black

Vulture, Bufflehead, King Rail, Sandhill Crane, Whimbrel, Red Knot, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Snowy Owls, and Red Crossbill.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRH – Bishop Road Hawk Watch, T Richland; DH – Derby Hill; DL – Delta Lake; Dvl – Durhamville; FH – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity; Geo – Georgetown; LOL – Lake Ontario Littoral; OneiL – Oneida Lake; OnonL – Onondaga Lake; SCH – T Schroeppe; SHF – Sky High Sod Farms, T Sullivan; SFNS – Spring Farm Nature Sanctuary, Kirkland; Skan – Skaneateles; SL – T's Sullivan & Lenox mucklands; SPd – Sandy Pond; SVB – Sylvan and Verona Beach; Syr – Syracuse; UM – Utica Marsh; VB – Van Buren; WM – West Monroe.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: Phoenix 30 Jul (KM).
Trumpeter Swan: pair Volney thru 10 Jul, nest apparently failed.
Blue-winged Teal: SPd 17 Aug.
N. Pintail: Canastota 2 Aug.
Lesser Scaup: OneiL 27 Jun.
Long-tailed Duck: last LOL 2 Jun.
Bufflehead: DH 8-9 Aug (TSh).
Red-breasted Merganser: last LOL 2 Jun.
N. Bobwhite: released winter survivors with young SL.
Com. Loon: imm. Delta L 19 Jul; SPd 20 Aug, alt.
Pied-billed Grebe: ad & y Volney 6 Jun.
BROWN PELICAN: Eagle Bay 19-22 Aug (BPut, NYSARC, mob), fifth Regional record.
Least Bittern: 3 Volney 6 Jun; 2 UM 16 Jun; 3 SPd thru.
Great Blue Heron: 14 juv DH 31 Jul, dispersal flight.
Great Egret: max 4 Red Mill T Onondaga 19 Aug; about 8 other individuals.
Green Heron: max 20 Volney 26 Aug.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: SL 19 Jul; OnonL 14 Aug; SPd 17 Aug.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Black Vulture: Syr 7 Jun (LE), third summer record.
Bald Eagle: max 15 DH 28 Jul & 18 Aug.
N. Harrier: 5 BRH 27 Aug.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 5 BRH 27 Aug.
N. Goshawk: 5 reports.
Red-shouldered Hawk: DH 29 Jul, 18 Aug.
Broad-winged Hawk: max 17 DH 18 Aug.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 221 DH 18 Aug.
Merlin: migrants after 8 Aug.
Peregrine Falcon: DH 20 Aug; SL 29 Aug.
KING RAIL: 2 SCH to 3 Jun.
Com. Moorhen: max 47 Volney 31 Jul, mostly young.
Am. Coot: 2 Volney 6 Jun; ad & y UM 24 Jun.
Sandhill Crane: DH 28 Jul (TC).
Black-bellied Plover: 2 SHF 5 Aug; 2 SPd 12 Aug; SHF 25 Aug.
Am. Golden-Plover: arr & max 6 SL 25 Aug.
Semipalmated Plover: arr 2 Verona Marsh 25 Jul; max 5 Verona Marsh 30 Jul.
Killdeer: max 210 SHF 18 Jul.
Spotted Sandpiper: max 14 OnonL 25 Aug.
Solitary Sandpiper: arr SL 2 Jul; max 12 SL 25 Aug.

Greater Yellowlegs: arr SL 11 Jul, max 2 per day.
Lesser Yellowlegs: arr SL 1 Jul; max 15 SL 18 Jul.
Upland Sandpiper: 2 Volney 6 Jun; SHF 26 Aug.
Whimbrel: SPd 12 Aug (BP), only report.
Ruddy Turnstone: SPd 20-25 Aug.
Red Knot: SPd 3 Aug, only report.
Sanderling: 4 FH 31 Jul; max 30 SPd 3 Aug.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: SL 17 Jul; max 18 SPd 12 Aug.
Least Sandpiper: arr SL 11 Jul; max 92 Verona Marsh 25 Jul.
White-rumped Sandpiper: SPd 12 Aug, only report.
Baird's Sandpiper: arr & max 3 Verona 27 Jul; 4 late Aug reports.
Pectoral Sandpiper: arr 2 Volney 19 Jul; max 4 SHF 4 Aug.
Short-billed Dowitcher: arr SL 1 Jul; max only one per day.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 76 OneiL 28 Aug.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: SPd 17 Aug.
Caspian Tern: max 87 SPd 17 Aug.
Black Tern: max 50 SPd 3 Aug.
Com. Tern: max 75 SPd 12 Aug.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 12 reports, mostly southern half of Region.
Black-billed Cuckoo: 9 reports, hurt by cool weather?
Snowy Owl: Deerfield 3 Jun (Steve Heering, ph); Lysander & Clay 4-14 Aug (JB, mob).
N. Saw-whet Owl: Remsen 19 Jul, only report.
Com. Nighthawk: max 3 Waterville 25 Aug; total of 18 Aug migrants.
Whip-poor-will: at usual sites T's Constantia & Cleveland.
Chimney Swift: max 323 Oneida 13 Aug.
Red-headed Woodpecker: Cicero 6 Jun; Morrisville 20 Jun; SVB 11 Jul.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Olive-sided Flycatcher: Old Forge 21 Jun; arr SPd 12 Aug.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: 3 reports after 15 Aug.
Acadian Flycatcher: reports from Camillus & Whiskey Hollow.
E. Kingbird: max 14 Verona Marsh 22 Aug.
Blue-headed Vireo: arr SPd 12 Aug, early.
Philadelphia Vireo: DH 30 Aug.
Com. Raven: Lafayette 19 Jul; widespread OSWE.
Horned Lark: max 25 SHF 15 Jul.

Purple Martin: max 320 WM 13 Aug.
Tree Swallow: max 1400 Skan 22 Aug.
Bank Swallow: max 45 SPd 3 Aug.
Cliff Swallow: max 400 Dvl 22 Aug.
Barn Swallow: max 600 WM 25 Aug.
N. Mockingbird: Stillwater Res 10 Jul, unusual site (TSa).

WARBLERS

Golden-winged Warbler: 6 reports.
"Brewster's" Warbler: Clinton 9 Aug.
Tennessee Warbler: arr SFNS 27 Aug.
Nashville Warbler: migrants after 21 Aug.
N. Parula: Adks only.
Yellow Warbler: max 65 SPd 12 Aug.
Magnolia Warbler: arr SFNS 14 Aug.
Black-throated Green Warbler: Clay Marsh 1 Jun, late migrant.
Blackburnian Warbler: DH 31 Jul, presumably southbound.
Pine Warbler: 2 Muller Hill Geo 27 Jun, increasing there.
Prairie Warbler: Tully 3 Jun & 2 Geo 27 Jun, only sites.
Bay-breasted Warbler: arr WM 28 Aug.
Blackpoll Warbler: last Hamilton 12 Jun.
Cerulean Warbler: SVB 11 Jul, new site.
Prothonotary Warbler: WM thru Jun.
Louisiana Waterthrush: last Clinton 16 Aug, late.
Mourning Warbler: 11 VB 18 Jun, good count.
Wilson's Warbler: last UM 2 Jun; arr SVB, SFNS 28 Aug.
Canada Warbler: migrants after 13 Aug.

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

Vesper Sparrow: Clinton 9 Jun, new site; SL 2 Jul, in cornfield.
Grasshopper Sparrow: max 5 Carley Mills 17 Jun.
Lincoln's Sparrow: several Adk reports.
Bobolink: to 60 per day SL after 15 Aug.
Red-winged Blackbird: max 3300 WM 17 Aug.
E. Meadowlark: 14 Fulton Airport 16 Jul, good number.
Com. Grackle: max 2100 WM 25 Aug.
Orchard Oriole: max 8 Green Lakes SP 25 Jul, 7 imm; others at SFNS, SL & VB.
Purple Finch: usual mid Jul dispersal with small flocks in Aug.
Red Crossbill: Nelson Swamp 5 Jun (MY); 3 Geo 9 Jul.
Pine Siskin: small numbers in Jun; last 2 W Winfield 7 Jul.